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On 27 June 1994, the European Research Council adopted Decisions on two of the specific programmes under the Fourth Framework Programme for research and technological development (1994-1998). The two programmes concern communications technologies and industrial and materials technologies. Eighteen programmes remain to be adopted.

Although the pre-adoption process can take some time, it achieves a balanced programme in which the views of the Council, the Parliament and the Commission are moulded into initiatives which spearhead technological development in the European Union.

The different stages leading up to final adoption of the specific programmes are outlined below.

The European Parliament's input to the specific programmes begins with the opinion of the Parliament's Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy (CRTDE). Formerly the Committee on Energy Research and Technology (CERT), it reconvened in July to agree the agenda for the next meeting and to select new Committee members following the European elections in June.

The meeting of the new Committee, originally scheduled for 29 August 1994, was postponed for procedural reasons and is now expected to take place at the beginning of September.

The meeting will select a rapporteur for each of the 18 specific programmes which remain to be adopted by the Council. At this stage discussions can proceed on each of the specific programmes.

The members of the European Parliament who form the new Committee have continued the efforts of the previous Committee to ensure that the whole process in general, and the specific programmes in particular, are dealt with as rapidly as possible, so as to allow their successful and speedy transmission to the European Council.

Although the Committee has postponed its August meeting, it should deal with all of the programmes by the end of September.

Once the opinions on the specific programmes have been adopted by Parliament they are sent back to the Commission which can then reformulate its proposal, while deciding which parliamentary amendments, if any, to include. The pre-legislative consultation process continues with the Council Working Group on Research and the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER). The group examines each of the specific programmes in detail, taking into account the opinions of the CREST and CRTDE Committees and any other opinions which have been presented to it.

The next COREPER meeting is scheduled for 13 and 21 September 1994. The full Council will then meet on 29 September 1994 to adopt the specific programmes which have been presented by the Commission.

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